

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 016850

SIPDIS

DEPT - PLEASE PASS TO USAID
KABUL - PLEASE PASS TO CFC-A

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [AEMR](#) [ASEC](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE: KAGHAN AND ALLAI VALLEYS

1. Summary: A team from the Embassy's Forward Operating Base in Mansehra (Officer-in-Charge (OIC), USAID/DART Field Officer, U.S. Military Liaison Officer) and representatives of five USAID-funded NGOs visited the Northern Kaghan and Allai Valleys on November 9. In both areas, Pakistan military commanders are strongly encouraging villagers to relocate for the winter to facilitate assistance efforts. In northern Kaghan, where most families migrate south to Balakot annually, this advice is being followed. In Allai, however, most people appear reluctant to leave and will continue to require significant assistance. Alternative shelter programs will be critical to survival in Allai during the winter months. Geological activity in Allai remains a significant concern and rumors of volcanic activity continue to persist. Villagers appear grateful for USG assistance and have a generally positive view of Pakistan army efforts. They are, however, resentful at the provincial government and many political parties for their perceived lack of response. End Summary.

Kaghan Valley

2. The northern end of the Kaghan Valley centered around the town of Narang was completely isolated by landslides that destroyed the area's one access road. Resupply of this area of Kaghan has been limited to helicopter support flights from the Pakistan military. The road opened for the first time to light vehicle traffic on the morning of the delegation's arrival. According to local villagers, the area around Narang has traditionally been seen as having too harsh a climate for winter settlement. Most villagers spend 8 months of the year in Narang engaged in both agriculture and the tourist industry and then move down the valley to Balakot for the winter after the final potato harvest. Prior to the earthquake most families had temporary shelter for themselves and their livestock in Balakot. This is now destroyed.

3. Villagers told us that, as in previous years, only about 25 people will remain in the Narang area during the winter. Most will stay in the tourist hotels, which did not appear to sustain significant damage during the earthquake. Foodstocks in the village are sufficient for these remaining individuals. Those intending to leave the village will do so in about 12 days, after the harvest is in. There is a serious concern among villagers that the tent camp being established in Jaba Farms (where the army is encouraging villagers to go) lacks sufficient tents, facilities for livestock, and education for children. The private schools in Balakot in which parents usually enrolled their children are now piles of rubble. This migratory pattern contrasts with the southern Kaghan Valley, where at least half the population has told NGOs that they intend to remain in place for the winter. Based on this information, U.S.-funded NGOs intend to continue to focus their supply efforts in southern Kaghan operating out of Paras.

Allai Valley

4. FOB Team visited two sites in the Allai Valley: the Rashang Union Council and the town of Bana, the center of relief operations. Military officials present in both locations were adamant that villagers had to leave the valley to survive. They were strongly encouraging villagers to migrate south to the tent city being established in Marai, Shangla District. For a variety of reasons, villagers seemed reluctant to make this transition. Those we spoke with cited concern for their property, safety of their domestic animals, historical ties to their villages, and suspicion about conditions in the camps. Military officials, in cooperation with NGOs, faced an uphill battle addressing these concerns. Even the most optimistic officials that we spoke with estimated that only half the area's population of 60,000 would move south. Based on movement to date (the harvest in Allai is essentially finished), the final numbers departing may be far lower.

5. The major need in the Allai Valley appears to be shelter. Insufficient numbers of winterized tents have arrived, although shipments by helicopter (essential due to blocked roads in many areas) continue to arrive. Military and NGO

representatives were skeptical that even properly winterized tents would be sufficient to allow individuals to survive in the harsh winter climate of the area. In addition, transport of such tents before the weather shifts appears a near impossible task. As an alternative, NGOs strongly pushed for funding of alternative shelter programs. These would provide construction kits and advice to enable villagers to rebuild appropriate accommodation using materials from their collapsed houses. Villagers seemed open to the idea and were already recovering stones, timber, and corrugated sheeting from their collapsed properties, most of which could easily be reused. Foodstocks in Allai appear in relatively good shape, despite some damage from the earthquake, although no comprehensive study is available. Prepositioning of food is still a welcome activity, although some of it may go unused. Villagers continued to report smoke and fire coming from some mountains in Allai. Military commander in Rashang reported that Battela Mountain was a particular concern.

Political Perceptions

16. Villagers were uniformly positive about the USG role. Many had received supplies from U.S. military and INL helicopters and clearly believed that we were going to assist long-term. The active presence of U.S.-funded NGOs in the Allai Valley further enhances this positive view. Similarly, villagers were grateful to the Pakistan Army for its role in facilitating assistance. Soldiers were often the first relief personnel on the ground and had delivered a great deal to the local populace. The only tinge of resentment was towards the consistent messages requesting villagers to leave their homes. The provincial government was routinely criticized for its virtually invisibility. Villagers claimed that, although provincial ministers and officials had visited, they had done nothing to provide needed relief. Asked about the political parties, there was great resentment towards the Pakistan Muslim League, Pakistan People's Party, Awami National Party, and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazlur Rehman. Village elders claimed none of them had done anything to help and were only interested in votes. Frequent contrasts were made with Jamaat-i-Islami, whose on-the-ground relief camps appear to have done a great deal to improve its image.

Comment

17. The northern Kaghan Valley appears unique in the area, as it already has a long history of winter migration to the south. We do not believe that other areas will follow this pattern. Particularly in the Allai Valley, in-place assistance will be critical through the winter months and must include an immediate emphasis on alternative shelter that can be developed in relatively short order. Food supplies in these areas will need to be monitored by on-the-ground personnel and logistical plans will need to be developed to distribute on an as-needed basis.

18. Embassy Islamabad is transmitting this cable on behalf of FOB Mansehra.
CROCKER